

Exhibit 7

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M.L.B., Once Averse to Gambling, Strikes a Deal With MGM Resorts

By **Billy Witz**

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For generations, baseball's leadership has viewed gambling as the sport's boogeyman, a threat to the integrity of the game that must be stamped out. If the lifetime bans meted out after the Black Sox scandal in 1919 and to Pete Rose in 1989 were not reminders enough, then there are the warnings posted in every major league clubhouse.

So, when Major League Baseball announced an agreement on Tuesday with MGM Resorts as the sport's first gambling industry partner, it signaled again just how furiously sports are rushing to embrace the industry since the Supreme Court effectively struck down a federal law earlier this year that had served to ban sports betting in most states.

Baseball's agreement comes after the N.B.A. and the N.H.L. also reached deals with MGM since July. It allows MGM to promote its gambling options on platforms like MLB Network, MLB.com and the MLB At Bat app.

Commissioner Rob Manfred viewed the arrangement as a long-term partnership that he hoped would reverse a troubling trend: declining attendance.

Attendance dropped by 4 percent last season — the fifth time in six seasons it had declined — and dropped below 70 million for the first time since 2003.

“Our research is really strong on the idea that sports gaming can be an important source of fan engagement,” Manfred said during a news conference. “We operate in a really competitive environment and we have to take advantage of every opportunity to drive engagement by our fans.”

In some ways, baseball seems better positioned than other sports to draw in gamblers because of the deliberate pace, with its built-in breaks between pitches. Those pauses, far less frequent in other sports, could allow fans additional opportunities to place bets during a game. For example, a fan could bet on whether Boston's Mookie Betts hits a single, double, home run, a groundout or a strikeout in his next at-bat.

Those types of betting opportunities might put more people in seats — and keep them there whether the game itself is compelling or not.

“Baseball is perfectly suited for this,” said Jim Murren, the MGM Resorts chairman and chief executive. “It will increase social networks. People will be talking about the next pitch, the next out, the next inning. It will extend the viewership of games throughout multiple innings, regardless of the outcome or the score in that given period.”

Terms of the deal were not announced, but if MGM's reported three-year, \$25 million deal with the N.B.A. is a guideline, this is not anywhere near the cash cow that television and other sponsorships bring in. The N.B.A. last year began an eight-year deal with Nike for close to \$1 billion, according to ESPN.

What may carry more appeal to both partners is having access to each other's data. MGM will have access to certain proprietary data that baseball has available, such as exit velocity and spin rate. Meanwhile, M.L.B. will have access to the 31 million people Murren said were in MGM's database.

Not surprisingly, Manfred and Murren repeatedly came back to a talking point — integrity.

Manfred said that his office had been studying how it wanted to plunge into gambling for 18 months. While M.L.B. has lobbied persistently in New York and Washington, it has also been updating its policies about how players and team employees can participate as it develops guidelines for teams to strike deals with gambling businesses. Manfred said those policies would be decided soon.

But the specter of baseball's past, of why Rose and Shoeless Joe Jackson are not in the Hall of Fame, is still apparent.

“It’s more than just making a business deal,” Manfred said. “It’s having in place a set of policies for the industry that give us comfort on what is always our most important issue — that is integrity.”

New Procedures for Political Contributions

Major League Baseball will put in place new procedures for vetting political contributions after giving \$5,000 to Cindy Hyde-Smith, a Republican senator from Mississippi, and then asking for the money back after her controversial remarks.

M.L.B.’s political action committee donated \$472,500 from the start of 2017 through this Oct. 17, according to Federal Election Commission records. Among the distributions were two \$2,500 contributions to Hyde-Smith’s Senate campaign on June 26 and Sept. 24 this year.

“Our lobbyists had a lot of discretion as to what they were doing, particularly with contributions of that size, and there’s just going to be additional oversight here in New York,” Rob Manfred said Tuesday. “We did not review in advance contributions of that size.”

M.L.B. intends to have its legislative affairs committee discuss new procedures before making any decisions.

A video showed Hyde-Smith praising a supporter this month by saying, “If he invited me to a public hanging, I’d be on the front row.”

Opponents characterized the comment as insensitive given Mississippi’s history of racially motivated lynching. Hyde-Smith, competing against Mike Espy, a Democrat, in Tuesday’s runoff election, said her remark was “an exaggerated expression of regard.” More than a week after the video’s release, she said she apologized to “anyone that was offended” but also said the remark was used as a “weapon” against her.

Hyde-Smith was seen in another video talking about making voting difficult for “liberal folks,” and a photograph circulated of her wearing a replica Confederate military hat during a 2014 visit to Beauvoir, a beachside museum in Biloxi, Miss., that was the last home of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Manfred did not want to comment on Charles Johnson, one of the San Francisco Giants' principal owners, and his wife Ann each making a contribution to Hyde-Smith for \$2,700, the individual maximum.

"The Giants have more than 30 owners," the team president, Larry Baer, said in a statement Monday. "Just like our fans, they come from different backgrounds and have their own political views. Many give to Democratic causes, many to Republican causes, and some refrain from politics altogether. Neither I nor anyone else at the Giants can control who any of our owners support politically, just as we cannot and should not control whom any of our employees support politically." (AP)